



GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

24-25

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Summary of Program Requirements by Year

First Year

- Two statistics courses
- Sociological Theory & History of the Discipline
- Techniques and Methods of Social Science
- Two research apprenticeships
- Two-Four Mini Seminars

Second Year

- Take Qualifying Exam the week before classes begin
- Empirical Seminar
- Research Apprenticeships
- Mini Seminars
- Precepting for Sociology department classes
- Take General Exam at end of spring semester
- Submit Empirical Paper by June 30
- Complete all coursework (12 full semester course-equivalents) for re-enrollment

Third Year

- Precepting for Sociology department classes (if not completed in year 2)
- Take additional mini-seminars, workshops and methods courses as needed
- Write dissertation proposal
- Dissertation proposal submitted no later than May 15th

Fourth Year

- Dissertation Research
- Submit plan for fellowship applications in case of need for sixth year funding

Fifth Year

- Apply for Fellowships
- Finish dissertation

FIRST TWO YEARS OF STUDY

The first two years of your doctoral are primarily centered around coursework, collective training within courses, and individual research apprenticeships with faculty. The department offers a mix of full semester courses and half semester courses known as “mini seminars.” Full semester courses count for a full unit and mini seminars count for half a unit. Students are required to enroll in at least one mini seminar during each semester of the first two years. While this is a minimum requirement, the department recommends that students take 3-4 minis in the first year to receive a broad introduction to sociology and to prepare for the qualifying exam in the beginning of the second year. Students are also required to take the following within our department: two semesters of statistics, Sociological Theory & History of the Discipline, Techniques and Methods of Social Science, four semesters of a research apprenticeship, and the two-semester empirical seminar. Completing these courses by the end of the second year will result in satisfying the minimum requirement of 12 units. It is expected, however, that most students will complete more units to achieve their various individual objectives.

First Year

Fall Semester:

- Statistics (SOC 500)
- Sociological Theory & History of the Discipline (SOC501)
- [Research Apprenticeship](#) (SOC599, more below)
- At least one 6-week [Mini Seminar](#)
- Attend the departmental colloquium (required)
- Be involved in workshops (encouraged)

Spring Semester

- Statistics (SOC504)
- Techniques and Methods of Social Science (SOC503)
- [Research Apprenticeship](#)
- At least one 6-week [Mini Seminar](#)
- Attend the departmental colloquium (required)
- Be involved in workshops (encouraged)

Second Year

Fall Semester :

- Take [Qualifying Exam](#) the week before classes begin
- Empirical Seminar (SOC505)
- [Research Apprenticeship](#)
- At least one 6-week [Mini Seminar](#)
- [Precept](#) (no course credit)
- Attend the departmental colloquium (required)
- Be involved in workshops (encouraged)

Spring Semester :

- Empirical Seminar (SOC505)
- Research Apprenticeship
- At least one 6-week [Mini Seminar](#)
- [Precept](#) (no course credit)
- Take oral portion of the [General Exam](#) at end of spring semester (tied to empirical seminar)
- [Submit Empirical Paper](#) By June 30 (tied to empirical seminar)
- Attend the departmental colloquium (required)
- Be involved in workshops (encouraged)
- All coursework ([12 full semester course-equivalents](#)) must be completed by the end of the second year to qualify for reenrollment for the third year.

Mini-seminars

Of the minimum requirement of four substance area mini-seminars, one of these may be taken outside the department or as a reading course. Whether the course taken outside the department is a semester long or a half-semester course, it may displace only one of the required minis. In addition to the one permitted mini substitution, a student may request to defer one of the three designated departmental mini-seminars to the fall of the third year in order to accommodate taking additional cross-listed courses in substantive sociological research areas during years 1-2 (e.g., JDP, OPR). In all instances, a student must take at least one mini- or cross-listed equivalent course in a substantive research domain during each semester of the first two years, and students must take at least three of the designated departmental minis during the first five semesters.

These are minimum requirements. Students are *strongly* encouraged to take more minis, particularly in their first year. At least two of these minis must be designated “theory intensive” courses by the instructor and DGS.

Note: Independent Reading Courses must be approved by the department as well as the Graduate School. IRCs should be approved before the semester in which they are taught begins. The approval process takes some time so should be in touch with the GPA at least three weeks before the semester begins to initiate the process.

Research Apprenticeships

The research apprenticeship is a full semester course. It is meant to provide an institutional framework to facilitate student-faculty pedagogical relationships, seed potential collaborative research relationships with faculty members, and teach students the art and science of doing sociological research through a hands-on approach.

Required Participation:

Students will be required to take this course four times: during the first and second semesters of their first year, and for the entire second year (in conjunction with the Empirical Seminar—see below).

Assignment to Mentors:

During the first year, students will be assigned a different faculty mentor each semester. For the second year, students can submit a ranked list of faculty with whom they would like to work and will be assigned to one faculty member for the entire year. This might be the one of the faculty to whom they were assigned during the first year or it may be another faculty member from their ranked list. Students

should note that they may not be assigned to their top choice. Faculty are limited to working as the Research Apprenticeship mentor to only one student per cohort. It is up to the individual faculty member to determine whether to accept a particular assignment made by the DGS, and faculty preferences will also be considered. The DGS will take all these factors into account in making final assignments for a given year.

Course Content

The research apprenticeships during the first year should involve assignments that lead to the acquisition of new research skills by the student and/or may lead to joint research project during that semester or in the future. We do not expect all research apprenticeships to seed long-term collaborations or result in tangible products, though we hope a substantial fraction foster ongoing, productive relationships. During the second year, however, it is hoped that a joint project will result that may also serve as the Empirical Seminar qualifying paper, if approved by both the Research Apprenticeship faculty member and the instructor of the Empirical Seminar. The amount of work done during the Fall and Spring of the first year is expected to be equivalent to a semester-long course. That expectation doubles during the second year since it is a year-long course.

Relation of the Apprenticeship to Work-for-Hire

The research apprenticeship is a course, and students may not be compensated by the faculty supervisor for work with that faculty member for the duration of the apprenticeship. During their enrollment, they may work for another faculty as an RA (subject to other graduate school and departmental regulations). They may also work for the research apprenticeship faculty supervisor as an RA prior to or after enrollment in the course, but students should not think of the research apprenticeship as an “audition” for a paid RA-ship.

Departmental Colloquium

All students are required to attend the department’s Monday lunchtime colloquia events, as well as all other occasional departmental panels, conferences, and major academic events in their entirety. This requirement is intended to widen students’ exposure to the field, familiarize them with the art of academic presentation, and help maintain a strong departmental community. The requirement may be waived, with the permission of the Director of the Graduate Studies, for students who are away from campus doing fieldwork. Of course, students are also encouraged to attend other relevant seminars and talks on campus.

Professional Development and Behavior

One goal of our training is to socialize students as members of a social-scientific community and profession. This includes adhering to norms of honesty and professionalism in communications, interactions, and research. Students are expected to conduct their work in accordance with highest standards of academic integrity. The failure to do so may be the basis of a decision not to re-enroll a student.

General Qualifying Exam

The Sociology General Exam is a two-part process, including a written essay-based test at the beginning of the second year and an oral research presentation at the end of the second year.

At the beginning of the second year—the week before classes start—students will be required to complete a take-home exam in five days (120 hours). The exam will consist of four parts. Each part consists of two questions, and students must answer one of them:

1. One question (of two) based on one of the departmental minis a student took during the first year. Each instructor who teaches a mini will be required to submit a Qualifying Exam question based on the course content.
2. One question (of two) based on the content presented in *Theory and History of the Discipline* course taken during the first year. The course instructor for Theory and History of the Discipline during a given year will be required to submit two Qualifying Exam questions based on the course content.
3. One question (of two) in a subject area that the student chooses from a set of topical reading lists (e.g., culture, race, etc.). Each reading list (available on [SharePoint](#)) will consist of approximately 40 articles, book chapters or the equivalent.
4. One question (of two) in a second subject area that the student chooses from the set of topical reading lists (e.g., culture, race, etc.). Each reading list (available on [SharePoint](#)) will consist of approximately 40 articles, book chapters or the equivalent.

Questions will be submitted to the DGS in advance of distribution to the students. The DGS will be, in conjunction with the graduate committee, responsible for ensuring that rigor of the exam questions is kept equitable across subjects. Instructors who teach the relevant courses (i.e., the minis or the Theory and History of the Discipline) will be responsible for not only providing the questions to the DGS but also for grading those respective sections of the exam. Those faculty who have constructed the reading lists for the other subject areas will, in turn, be responsible for the grading of those sections. The DGS will also serve as a second reviewer on questions that are deemed to have failed.

Students who have passed the OPR Demography exam in their first year need only choose one subject area rather than two, but they may not choose an OPR mini on which to be tested. Students who are interested in demography but do not wish to be full-fledged OPR trainees may take a Sociology of Population exam as one of their subject areas.

There may not be significant overlap between the “mini” chosen for testing and either subject area. That is, a student would not be able to choose, for example, an organizations or gender related mini on which to be tested as well as choose organizations or gender as one of their subject areas. They can, however, choose their subject areas to have substantial overlap with minis they took but did not choose for their one “mini” question. The DGS will approve the choices of subjects by the student.

If a student fails to pass one or more parts of the exam, they will have a chance to be re-examined in January on those part(s) they did not pass. If they fail to pass all four parts by the Spring semester of their second year, they will not be approved for re-enrollment for a third year. A secondary review of the January exam will be conducted by the Graduate Committee before a non-pass grade is issued.

The reading lists for the subject areas will be updated periodically by the relevant faculty. Entire subject areas/lists may be added or taken away depending on the expertise, composition and interests of the faculty as it evolves. However, faculty who wish to propose a new subject area must do this in consultation with the DGS and the graduate committee in order to avoid overly specialized or niche topics/reading lists. Lastly, if a professor offers a mini, they do so with the expectation that they will need to both provide questions as well as grade that mini exam section the following September if any

students choose to sit to be examined for that mini—regardless of whether that occurs during a faculty member’s leave. This is, of course, an informal norm.

The oral portion of General Exam will consist of an oral presentation during the exam period of the spring semester of the second year. This brief presentation is based on the research conducted for the second year Empirical Seminar. All students present their work and answer questions at the same event, to which all faculty are invited to attend. Once the student successfully presents this research, they will have been deemed to have passed the General Exam.

Submit Empirical Paper

Students must submit a major paper of publishable length and quality using quantitative or qualitative data. The paper is written in conjunction with the Seminar in Empirical Investigation (“The 2nd Year Empirical Seminar”) and is supervised by the instructor in charge of that seminar and advised, as well, from start to finish by a second reader. By June 30 in the students’ second year, the paper must be approved by both the primary advisor and the second reader, who can have served as the supervisor of a research apprenticeship. Both readers must be members of the Princeton University faculty (unless other arrangements have been made in advance with the Director of Graduate Studies). In the rare event that the two faculty readers reach a split decision about whether the work is passable, the DGS will serve as a third adjudicating reader.

MA Degree

After a student has completed the requisite requirements, they may apply for an MA degree. MAs are not automatically given; you must submit an application in Tigerhub. The MA degree is intended to offer an “offramp” option for students who wish to leave the doctoral program after two years. The requirements to receive an MA are as follow:

- Successful completion of at least 10 graduate courses (or 20 half-semester mini-units)

OR

- Completion of eight graduate courses (or 16 half-semester mini-units) and a capstone project, which may include passing the qualifying exam or completion of a capstone project. A capstone can be based on a previous research paper, or it can be a literature review that emerges out of the Empirical Seminar in lieu of a novel empirical contribution. If the paper is unrelated to the Empirical Seminar, the advisor is the faculty member who evaluates the capstone along with a second reader. If the capstone emerges out of the Empirical Seminar, then the Empirical Seminar instructor and a second reader serve as evaluators. The capstone can also arise independently of coursework and may also involve curation of a dataset, development and annotation of a software package, or policy analysis. The capstone will be accepted up to four months after termination of enrollment.

Precepting

The typical undergraduate course is divided between lecture and discussion (or “precept”) sessions, the latter of which are usually conducted by graduate students with appointments as Assistants in Instruction (AIs) (known at Princeton as “preceptors”). All graduate students are required to serve as AIs for six hours while in residence, ordinarily in their second and third years. For their precepting to count toward the departmental requirement, the courses students’ precept for must be sociology courses which originate in the department; any exceptions of this rule must be approved by the chair. The department works very hard to take student preferences into account when assigning precepts, but all courses must ultimately be covered, and the final assignments are at the discretion of the chair and Director of Undergraduate Studies. Assignments are not made through side deals with individual instructors, but through a transparent assignment process organized by GSAC in consultation with the chair.

Princeton University’s McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning provides training for graduate students prior to their first term as an AI. They also offer a range of services to graduate students wishing to improve their teaching skills, including additional instruction in teaching skills for foreign students through a mentoring program prior to the fall semester, a university-wide learning laboratory, and support for training sessions for faculty and AIs in large courses.

BEYOND THE SECOND YEAR

After the second year, students are expected to focus, increasingly, on their own work. In years three and beyond students have far fewer requirements. They must write a dissertation proposal which they defend by May 15th of their third year; apply for funding in their fifth year; precept if they have not completed their commitment by the end of the second year; and finally, research, write, and defend their dissertation.

Admission to Candidacy

Students are admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. upon the successful execution of their required coursework, General Examinations, qualifying paper, and any other department requirements. The Graduate School will not be notified that the student has completed the General Examination (i.e., the student will not be certified as having been admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D.) until all requirements have been completed.

Dissertation Prospectus

Upon completion of the General Examination, students turn their full attention to developing and writing a dissertation. Students should select a presumptive dissertation committee chair and two or more other likely members of their dissertation committee early in their third year, and work with those faculty members to prepare a dissertation proposal (prospectus) for approval. A complete draft prospectus must be submitted to the committee chair and DGS by May 15 of the third year for the student to be eligible for fourth-year reenrollment.

The prospectus (a document of at least 20 pages) includes a statement of the overarching problem to be studied, an explanation of its theoretical relevance to sociology, a survey of pertinent literature, a

provisional synopsis of the research sub-questions to be addressed in the respective chapter/paper components, a tentative statement of the main thesis or hypotheses, a discussion of the data and methods to be employed, and a detailed timeline. (Copies of sample dissertation proposals are available on the internal graduate program Sharepoint website or from the Graduate Program Administrator.)

Once a well-developed proposal has been submitted, the dissertation committee chair will call a meeting (“prospectus defense”) of the committee members and the student to discuss and officially approve the proposal. The dissertation proposal should be defended and approved in the spring of the third year, and certainly no later than the fall of the fourth year. This is a requirement for continued enrollment.

Dissertation Structure

The dissertation committee ordinarily consists of three members, though committees of four or even five members are permitted. The chair must be a member of the Princeton Sociology Department. Faculty from other Princeton academic units may also be on the committee. Under extraordinary circumstances, and with the approval of the committee chair and the Director of Graduate Studies, faculty from other universities may serve if they provide expertise that is (a) essential and (b) not available at Princeton. This must also be approved by the Graduate School in advance of your defense.

Two options are available for the format of the dissertation: (a) the traditional format of a single document divided into chapters, or (b) three separate but thematically related papers of publishable length and quality. Selection of these options is done in consultation with the student’s dissertation committee and with the committee’s approval. Incorporation of co-authored material in the dissertation is allowed if the student is the primary coauthor, and the other coauthors consent.

A final public oral examination (often referred to as a “dissertation defense”) is the last requirement for the achievement of the degree. The oral examination is given by a committee of four (or possibly more) faculty members. At least two of the oral examiners must be members of the dissertation committee, and at least three must be members of the Sociology Department faculty. An oral examination committee typically consists of three dissertation committee members plus an additional reader (referred to as an “outside reader” because they are “outside of” the dissertation committee).

DCE Enrollment and Sixth Year Funding

After five years in the program, students are beyond the official normal program length. Students who do not complete the dissertation after five years are eligible for two years of DCE (Dissertation Completion Enrollment) status in which they remain enrolled with health insurance and access to university resources in return for a modest fee.

Many students require a sixth year to complete their work. The department endeavors to provide a sixth year of back up fellowship funding to all students who have completed their program requirements. Our funding model depends on some students receiving outside fellowship support, and all students seeking back up funding are expected to apply for outside grants or fellowships. To receive sixth-year funding, students must satisfy the following requirements:

1. Attend a funding workshop session offered by the department in the fall of their fourth year to prepare them to apply for internal and external funding opportunities related to their research. If students are excused by the DGS from attending the department's workshop because of a conflict, they must demonstrate to the DGS that they have attended another University-offered workshop or have other relevant previous training or demonstrated record of success with grant writing that reasonably excuses them from this requirement.
2. By the end of their fourth year, develop an outline of which fellowships they will target for applications and have this outline approved by the DGS.
3. Make a reasonable effort in their fifth year to apply for internal and external funding opportunities related to their research. Provide documentation to the DGS of their efforts to apply for funding. The department expects all fifth-year students to apply for at least two fellowships or grants, including at least one external. This is regardless of whether they have received external support in previous years. Please note that if a student receives a fellowship below the Princeton stipend amount, the department will top up the funding to bring them to full fellowship level.
4. Submit at least two complete drafts of dissertation chapters (or one complete chapter draft and a detailed outline of a second chapter) by April 30th of their fifth year. These chapters must be submitted to and approved by the adviser and the DGS. For students pursuing the three-paper option for the dissertation, two complete draft articles (or one complete draft article and one detailed outline for a second article) that qualify as two of the three papers must be submitted to the adviser and DGS by the same deadline.

Please note that this final requirement was established by the Graduate School when the department established its 6th year back up funding. Under these procedures, students will not be notified of approval for 6th year back up funding until the very end of the fifth year because the Graduate School requires that the department certify the completion of requirements of the cohort after the April 30th deadline, as noted above. We understand that this may cause anxiety for some students, and we recommend that any student who is concerned about whether they have fulfilled the requirements be in touch with the DGS. Anyone who has fulfilled these four requirements can rely upon the department's commitment to providing 6th year funding.

Research and Conference Travel Funding

The department will provide students in G2 year and above access to research and conference travel funds. All spending is subject to university travel rules. Travel must be registered before your trip and approved by the University, or otherwise the department cannot reimburse you. Students must submit expense reports and itemized receipts for reimbursement. Students are also encouraged to seek out support from the graduate school and other campus units to support conference travel and other academic opportunities: <<https://gradschool.princeton.edu/financial-support/additional-funding-support/student-activity-funding>>